

AAFP News: *AFP Edition*

Policy and Health Issues in the News

ONC Lays Out 10-Year Plan for Nation's Health Information Technology Future

The Office of the National Coordinator (ONC) for Health Information Technology recently released a 10-year work plan to ensure that the United States will have an interoperable health information technology (IT) infrastructure by the end of the next decade. The report springs from the nation's need for a health IT system that allows patients, families, and physicians to have easy access to health information. The ONC listed nine principles that will guide the plan over the next decade, including: building on existing health IT infrastructure to maximize the investments already made, recognizing that one size does not fit all and that users have different needs, empowering individuals to become active partners in their health care, leveraging a market that is demanding interoperability of health IT users, keeping solutions as simple as possible, maintaining the modularity of health IT to encourage innovation without having to overhaul entire systems, supporting the varying skill levels of those who use health IT, focusing on value to offset the cost of health IT investment, and protecting privacy and security. For more information, go to <http://www.aafp.org/news/government-medicine/20140616onc10yrplan.html>.

AHRQ Reports Show Quality of U.S. Health Care Is Fair But Slowly Improving

For the 11th consecutive year, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) has released complementary reports that assess the U.S. health care system's performance in quality, access, and disparities in care. The National Healthcare Quality Report and National Healthcare Disparities Report rated the quality of U.S. health care as fair, access to care also as fair, and the level of health care disparities as poor. Quality measures include immunizations; counseling about smoking, weight loss, and exercise; treatment of diabetes mellitus and pneumonia; and others. On average, Americans received 70% of indicated health care services in 2010, which means they did not receive 30% of the care needed to treat or prevent specific medical conditions. This shows that the quality of care is slowly improving, the authors said, noting that in 2005, patients received about 66% of recommended health care services. The researchers noted that this year's reports provide a snapshot of the U.S. health care system before the implementation of the Patient

Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) and would serve as a baseline for tracking progress in the future. For more information, go to <http://www.aafp.org/news/government-medicine/20140603qualdisparpts.html>.

Report Describes Ongoing Gaps in Women's Health Care as Rollout of ACA Continues

Women may be the primary caregivers in many families, but they often sacrifice their own health care, according to a recent study. Compared with men, a higher percentage of women choose to delay or forgo health care entirely. When medical costs are taken into account, the gender gap widens even further because 10% more women than men are paying off bills. The survey from the Kaiser Family Foundation studied the impact of the ACA on women's health, and detailed the proportion of women with insurance, the barriers they encounter in obtaining care, where they go for care, and their general knowledge about what is covered under the ACA. The survey was based on responses from 3,000 women 15 to 64 years of age. Among the survey's findings were that 40% of low-income women are not covered by insurance, and that 65% who do not have insurance said they delayed or went without health care. For more information, go to <http://www.aafp.org/news/government-medicine/20140527kaiserwomenrpt.html>.

Webcast Offers Free ICD-10 Training

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services invites family physicians to view a new webcast that covers documentation and coding related to the International Classification of Diseases, 10th ed. (ICD-10) code sets for outpatient diagnostic coding. The free webcast runs about 46 minutes and was designed to meet the clinical documentation needs that are unique to family medicine and internal medicine physicians. The webcast is part of a larger program called the Road to 10, which aims to train physicians of all medical specialties on how to correctly use the ICD-10 code sets that are scheduled for implementation in 2015. The ICD-10 will increase the number of diagnosis codes available to physicians from about 14,500 under the current ICD-9 system to about 69,700. The webcast is available at http://www.roadto10.org/?page_id=3504#fam.

— AAFP AND AAFP NEWS STAFF

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